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ABSTRACT

This publication is concerned with how to keep schools safe. The spring 2001 issue "New Study Reveals Prevalence, Harm of Bullying" (Ira Pollack) discusses a study about bullying based on data collected in 1998 by the World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey of 15,686 students in grades 6 through 10 and sheds light on the prevalence of bullying among youth in this country. Other articles included are: "Surgeon General Highlights Effective Prevention Programs" and a guest column, "Alternative Programs: Beyond Either/Or" (Ron Rubin). The summer 2001 issue, "State Safety Centers Centralize Resources" (Ira Pollack), finds that state-based school safety centers can play an important role in centralizing resources and helping local districts create safer learning environments and describes several approaches taken by states, such as New York, Kentucky, and Oregon. Other articles are a guest column, "School Safety Report Card Raises Awareness" (Saul B. Wilen; Ruth N. Fagan; Frederick Van Wert), "Partners Team Up to Reduce Hate Crimes," and "Case Studies Examine Local Prevention Efforts." The fall 2001 issue, ""In Youth Courts, Teens Hold Teens Accountable" (Violet Colydas and Scott Peterson), discusses the growth of the youth court system which provides a positive alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system since 1994. The number of programs in the United States has grown from 78 to more than 800, with another 100 in development. Other articles include "Creating Safe Schools Is Personal Issue for New Director," "Close Up: Colonie Youth Court," "Students' Input Vital to School Improvement" (Denise Jarrett Weeks), and "Student Voices on School Safety" (Cindy Workman). The winter 2001 issue, "Threat of Bioterrorism Reshaping School Safety Plans" (Ira Pollack), highlights the need for changes in crisis-response planning since the events of September 11, 2001. The guest

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column, "Making Schools Safer: One School's Experience" (Richard Lawrence), relates how educators in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, recently teamed up with the local police department to reduce the incidence of threats and promote school safety. Another article, "Study Provides First Detailed Look at School-Related Deaths," discusses the results of a study which appeared in the "Journal of the American Medical Association," and which found that school shootings, suicides, and other violent deaths associated with schools are rare, but complex events. Each issue also contains a list of safety resources, a news and announcements section, and a calendar of events. (BT)

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THE Safety Zone

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2001

NEW STUDY REVEALS PREVALENCE, HARM OF BULLYING

TWO SISTERS ARE COMFORTED BY THEIR FATHER AFTER A SCHOOL SHOOTING THAT LEFT TWO STUDENTS DEAD AT SANTANA HIGH SCHOOL IN SANTEE, CALIFORNIA. (AP PHOTO/NICK UT)

When reporters went looking for reasons why a Southern California boy would open fire on his classmates, they heard that the 15-year-old charged with killing two fellow students in March was the target of frequent bullying. The same week, a 14-year-old girl in Pennsylvania was accused of shooting a fellow student in the shoulder. Her parents said that she, too, was routinely bullied at school.

Although there's no evidence that taunting and teasing inexorably lead to youth violence, researchers are taking the subject of bullying seriously. A new national report reveals that nearly 30 percent of sixth- through 10th-graders have participated in bullying, have been the victims of bullies, or both. "Bullying is a red flag indicating risk and the need for prevention and/or intervention," concludes an editorial in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, which published the report.

The bullying study used data collected in 1998 by the World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey of 15,686 students in grades six through 10. It found that 13 percent of students said they sometimes or often bullied others, more than 10 percent reported being bullied, and more than 6 percent reported being both bully and the target of bullying.

As the study published in the April 25 *JAMA* points out, both perpetrators and victims of bullying risk long-term harm that can interfere with healthy psychosocial development. Youth who bully others tend to demonstrate higher levels of conduct problems, use of alcohol, and dislike of school. Youth who are bullied are at greater risk of anxiety, depression, loneliness, unhappiness, and low self-esteem, according to earlier research summarized in the *JAMA* study. And youth who report being on both ends of bullying—as both perpetrator and target—face especially high risks for problem behaviors and poor adjustment.

Although the survey shows that bullying tends to decline as students get older, the damage can extend into adulthood. The *JAMA* study cited evidence from pioneering researcher Dan Olweus showing that former bullies have a fourfold increase in criminal behavior at the age of 24. Young adults who were targets of bullying as children have higher levels of depression and poorer self-esteem than peers who were not bullied.

Call for Prevention

The new study sheds information on the prevalence of bullying among youth in this country that researchers hope will lead to heightened awareness and greater emphasis on prevention strategies. Lead author Tonja R. Nansel, Ph.D., noted that the prevalence of bullying "suggests the importance of preventive intervention research targeting bullying behaviors. Effective prevention will require a solid understanding of the social and environmental factors that facilitate and inhibit bullying and peer aggression. This knowledge could then be used to create school and social environments that promote healthy peer interactions and intolerance of bullying."

An editorial in the same issue of *JAMA* by two prominent physicians called for the development and evaluation of programs for prevention and intervention. "Bullying and being bullied

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CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS

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STUDY: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

appear to be important indicators that something is wrong, and children who experience either or both need help," wrote Howard Spivak, M.D., of Tufts University School of Medicine, and Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., of Harvard School of Public Health. "The primary prevention of bullying/being bullied involves eliminating factors that promote such behaviors (risk reduction) and teaching children the skills for more prosocial interpersonal interaction (resiliency development)."

Anti-Bullying Programs

European nations have taken the lead in developing programs to prevent bullying. Multifaceted interventions tend to include social skills training, efforts to change social norms about bullying, increased adult involvement and supervision, and interventions for those involved in bullying.

"These strategies are not only showing success, but reflect a more humane and developmentally appropriate direction than the excessively punitive approaches that have been taken by some schools [in the United States]," Spivak and Prothrow-Stith report.

High-profile school shootings have heightened interest in the relationship between bullying and youth violence. Information gathered by the U.S. Secret Service shows that about two-thirds of the attackers involved in recent incidents had felt bullied or persecuted by others. An effective response to bullying needs to take place "within the larger framework of violence prevention," Spivak and Prothrow-Stith conclude.

FACT SHEET ON BULLYING AVAILABLE

What causes some children to tease, taunt, or physically harass their peers? How often do students avoid school because they fear being bullied? Is there anything schools can do to change the climate so that bullying is not tolerated? These are among the questions answered in a fact sheet on bullying published by the National Resource Center for Safe Schools (NRCSS).

Recognizing and Preventing Bullying synthesizes research to address common questions and correct misunderstandings about bullying. It also challenges commonly held beliefs, such as the attitude held by many adults that bullying is "part of growing up."

To the contrary, as the fact sheet points out, bullying can cause long-term harm to both perpetrators and victims. Because aggressive behavior becomes increasingly hard to correct after age eight, early prevention is essential. And although studies show that adults may tend to ignore bullying, students uniformly want teachers to intervene to stop bullying and teasing.

Schools are in a position to change behaviors by adopting anti-bullying programs grounded in research. Schools that have implemented such programs have seen bullying drop by as much as 50 percent. The fact sheet summarizes recommendations for steps to intervene at the school, class, and individual levels.

Parents can also play a role in preventing bullying and helping children who are being bullied. The fact sheet emphasizes the importance of parents listening to their children who report being bullied and offering them sound advice.

To obtain a free copy of *Fact Sheet No. 4: Recognizing and Preventing Bullying*, call the National Resource Center for Safe Schools (1-800-268-2275), or download from the NRCSS Web site (www.safetyzone.org).

COLUMNISTS NEEDED

The Safety Zone publishes columns by students and guest experts dealing with school safety. While we cannot pay for articles, we do provide contributors with copies. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the editor by e-mail at safetyzoneeditor@nwrel.org, or call 1-800-268-2275.

SURGEON GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS EFFECTIVE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Weeks before shootings took place at high schools in California and Pennsylvania, U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher cautioned the public not to be complacent about youth violence and recommended interventions grounded in research to "redirect violent young people toward healthy and constructive adult lives."

Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General, released in January, examines the factors that lead young people to gravitate toward violence, reviews the factors that protect youth from perpetrating violence, and identifies effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

The first Surgeon General's report on youth violence synthesizes a massive body of research to identify effective programs. The success of prevention programs such as the 27 highlighted in the report should not be overshadowed by high-profile events, such as the March shooting that killed two students in Santee, California.

"Successful approaches [to preventing youth violence] are often eclipsed by random violence events such as the school shootings that have occurred in recent years," Dr. Satcher acknowledges. However, the Surgeon General stresses that "youth violence is not an intractable problem. We now have the knowledge and tools needed to reduce or even prevent much of the most serious youth violence, with the added benefit of reducing less dangerous, but still serious problem behaviors and promoting healthy development."

The report also takes on common myths and misunderstandings about youth violence. For example, one such myth suggests that the United States is threatened by a new breed of "young super-predators." In fact, a decadelong epidemic of youth violence peaked in 1993, and youth arrest rates for violent offenses continue to decline, according to the report.

"But the problem has not been resolved," cautions *Youth Violence*, which cites not only arrest records but also surveys in which youths report on their own behavior. "The number of adolescents involved in violent behavior remains disconcertingly high."

Research-Based Approaches

Youth Violence identifies 27 programs that have met rigorous scientific standards of effectiveness and warns communities not to spend "precious resources" on programs that are not supported by research. "Some experts believe that youth crime and violence rates could be substantially reduced simply by reallocating the money now spent on ineffective policies and programs to those that do work," according to the report.

The Surgeon General's report identifies programs targeted at prevention as well as intervention. Prevention programs focus on general populations and aim at lessening the likelihood that young people will engage in violent behavior. Skills-oriented programs, such as those that teach positive social skills and behavior management, are identified in the report as among the most effective general strategies for preventing violence.

Intervention programs aim at reducing the risk of violence among youth who display one or more risk factors for violence. Programs that target the families of high-risk children are among the most effective in preventing violence, according to the report. Interventions that aim to improve youths' moral-reasoning, problem-solving, and thinking skills are also highlighted as effective approaches to reducing youth violence in high-risk populations.

Effective programs vary in their use of strategies and target populations, and take place in settings that include home, school, and community. *Youth Violence* reports that effective programs generally:

- Target populations of young people who may face specific risk factors
- Build individual skills and competencies that can serve as protective factors
- Include parent effectiveness training
- Encourage changes in type and level of involvement in peer groups

"Does Not Work"

In addition to identifying best practices, *Youth Violence* also names programs found to be ineffective.

The report takes aim at the most widely implemented youth drug prevention program in the United States. Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or DARE, is rated "Does Not Work" by the Surgeon General's report. Boot camps for delinquent youths are also given low marks for effectiveness, and waivers of juvenile offenders to adult court "can have particularly harmful effects on delinquent youths," the report concludes.

Public Health Model

The Surgeon General's report addresses youth violence as a public health issue, continuing an initiative started by former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. The public health approach, according to the report, can help reduce the number of injuries and deaths caused by violence "just as it has reduced the number of traffic fatalities and deaths attributed to tobacco use." The public health approach typically uses practical, goal-oriented, and community-based strategies for promoting health.

The Surgeon General's ambitious research was initiated after the nation's worst episode of school violence at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999. Three federal agencies, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, contributed to the report.

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According to Dr. Satcher, the combined resources and perspectives of social scientists from diverse fields "afforded us a much fuller appreciation of the problem and much firmer grounds for optimism that the problem can be solved." The report outlines action steps the nation can take to prevent youth violence, including:

- Continuing science-based research
- Facilitating the entry of youth into effective intervention programs rather than incarcerating them
- Disseminating model programs
- Providing training
- Convening a periodic youth violence summit

The full text of *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General,* including an appendix listing model and promising programs, is available online at the Web site of the Surgeon General. (www. surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/)

CENTER OFFERS INFORMATION ON BEST PRACTICES

The National Resource Center for Safe Schools (NRCSS) provides information and training for schools and communities seeking to choose and implement effective programs for preventing youth violence.

The NRCSS devotes a unit of its training curriculum, *Creating Safe Schools: A Comprehensive Approach to Developing Safe School Plans,* to selecting and implementing research-based programs. (See related story on the Center's intensive Safe Schools Training, Page 7.)

NRCSS Director Carlos Sundermann cautions, however, that the implementation of effective research-based programs "should not be seen as a panacea for all the school safety concerns at an individual school." Such programs are often interventions designed to address particular problem areas, he points out, "and may not be comprehensive in scope." The NRCSS recommends considering the context of local needs and modifying programs "to address the unique conditions of individual schools and communities. What may work well in New York City may not work well in San Antonio," Sundermann notes.

Implementing a research-based program should be a response to a data-driven planning decision, according to Sundermann. The NRCSS also recommends putting program evaluations in place to measure results, "to measure overall impact," Sundermann adds.

The NRCSS provides links on its Web site to sources of information about violence prevention programs. Several online resources are also described in more detail in this newsletter (See SAFETY RESOURCES, Page 6). Among the online resources:

- *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action,* published by the Centers for Disease Control
- *Blueprints for Violence Prevention* from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence
- *Hamilton Fish Institute,* which has identified prevention programs that are well-designed, have demonstrated effectiveness, and can be implemented as part of a comprehensive school safety plan
- *Database of Prevention,* which includes references and abstracts of reviews of prevention research targeting children and/or adolescents

For more information, see the NRCSS Web site: www.safetyzone.org.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS: BEYOND EITHER/OR

GUEST COLUMN

By RON RUBIN

The establishment of alternative programs in school communities has steadily increased in recent years, both within and outside the regular educational setting. The vast majority of these programs aim at fulfilling the needs of students who exhibit challenging, disruptive, and sometimes aggressive behaviors, particularly the needs of students who have been identified as emotionally and/or behaviorally disturbed.

As these programs have increased in number, so have the debates regarding their efficacy. Many times these debates are driven by emotionally laden philosophical beliefs that lead to either/or positioning and controversy. On one side there are those who contend that every child should be educated in the regular school setting. On the other side are those who argue just as passionately that some children and youth are so disruptive, they don't belong with their peers.

Too frequently these debates cloud the practical questions that school community members might raise in order to move beyond either/or and engage in the kind of problem solving that forms the basis for collaborative decisionmaking and the development of genuinely effective educational opportunities for all students.

Perhaps a starting point would be to ask what strengths a school community possesses (in and outside the school building) that could enable it to meet the needs of students who exhibit challenging behaviors. What is the currently available array of services? What kinds of expertise exist? What types of resources can be tapped? How do these strengths match up with the needs of students who are to be served? How can these strengths be expanded and/or what is necessary in terms of professional development, family involvement, interagency collaboration, and tangible support to better meet the needs of students and adults? And, what significant approaches would be most cost-effective?

It might be equally significant to explore the question of who should be served by alternative programs and how they will be identified. For example, should such programs be limited only to students who are identified as emotionally and/or behaviorally disturbed? Should they serve all children, regardless of categorical labels, who disrupt the educational environment? What about students who never disrupt anything, but are depressed and perhaps at risk of committing suicide? What about students who exhibit gifted behaviors? Or perhaps alternative programs should be available to all students?

Given that alternative programs are ordinarily viewed as a temporary placement, it is certainly important to ask how reintegration into the regular school setting will be achieved. How will reintegration plans be developed, and by whom? And how will the success of such plans be determined?

Since research and our own experience inform us that many students in alternative programs don't need "fixing," but find the regular educational environment insufficient to meet their needs and hence don't want to be reintegrated, it would seem critical to ask what the relationship is between alternative programs, reintegration plans, and strengthening school capacity to fulfill diverse student needs.

Perhaps school communities should also explore the kinds of messages that are sent via the establishment of alternative programs as compared to the values and skills that we want students to learn. Is exclusion from the regular setting indicative of the use of power over reason? Does exclusion communicate that when problems become difficult to solve we simply get rid of them? Does exclusion say to those directly and indirectly involved that membership in our community is conditional? How do these potential messages size up next to endeavors aimed at helping students learn tolerance, respect for human differences, and problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, all of which are best learned through application in real circumstances?

These are only a few of the questions that could be raised prior to embarking on the establishment of an alternative program. Answering such questions and others might help to inform our debates and move us beyond the either/or propositions that are fueled by passion rather than creative problem solving. Answering such questions might ensure that if and when we establish an alternative program, we are assured that it builds upon the strengths of the school community; is clear in its purpose, whom it serves, and how they will be identified; contributes to increasing the capacity of the educational system as well as meeting the needs of students and adults; and communicates a message that is consistent with what we want children and youth to learn and internalize.

Ron Rubin coordinates the Crisis Prevention and Management Training Project and the Educational Support System Program of the Vermont Department of Education. He has been involved in education for more than 30 years. Most recently he played a leadership role in the development of Educational Support System Guidelines and formulating recommendations and guidelines stemming from the Commissioner's Task Force on School Violence. He provides training and technical assistance in the above areas. For more information, he can be reached by phone at (802) 656-1244, or via e-mail at rrubin@zoo.uvm.edu.

HOW DO THESE MESSAGES SIZE UP NEXT TO ENDEAVORS AIMED AT HELPING STUDENTS LEARN TOLERANCE, RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIFFERENCE, AND PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS?

SAFETY RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR LOAN

The following resources are just a few of the titles available for loan from the National Resource Center for Safe Schools lending library to clients across the United States. Library materials may be requested by telephone, e-mail, or ordered from our Web site (www.safetyzone.org/library.html) by schools, law enforcement agencies, state and county agencies, and organizations with a verifiable address and phone number. Individuals may request materials by interlibrary loan through their local library.

For further information, contact Resource Librarian Ira Pollack or Resource Specialist Ned Howard at 1-800-268-2275.

Bully-Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K–8 by Allan L. Beane

This book presents strategies and tips for teachers in grades K–8 to help students learn to resolve conflicts appropriately and safely and help schools become "bully-free" zones where students can learn with confidence and without fear.

Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do by Dan Olweus

This book describes survey data and an intervention program conducted in Sweden and Norway as part of a government-led nationwide campaign against bullying. The survey data support some conventional wisdom about bullying, but also destroy many long-held myths about bullies and victims. The goals of the intervention program were to reduce or eliminate both direct bullying (open physical or verbal attacks) and indirect bullying (social isolation, confidence reduction); achieve better peer relations at school; and create conditions that enabled victims and bullies to function better in and out of the school setting.

Bullying in Schools and What To Do About It by Ken Rigby

The purpose of this book is to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of school bullying and to suggest ways to counter it effectively.

In addition, the following Web sites provide information useful for locating violence prevention programs.

Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action

Best Practices is the first of its kind to look at the effectiveness of specific violence prevention practices in four key areas: parents and families; home visiting; social and conflict resolution skills; and mentoring. As a Centers for Disease Control publication, the sourcebook also documents the science behind each best practice and offers a comprehensive directory of resources. www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm

Blueprints for Violence Prevention

In 1996, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), with funding from the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice and the Centers for Disease Control (and later from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency), initiated a project to identify 10 violence prevention programs that met a very high scientific standard of program effectiveness. This series of "blueprints" describes the theoretical rationale, the core components of the program as implemented, the evaluation designs and results, and the practical experiences programs encountered while implementing the program at multiple sites. www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/Default.htm

Hamilton Fish Prevention Programs

The institute, with assistance from Congress, was founded in 1997 to serve as a national resource to test the effectiveness of school violence prevention methods and to develop more effective strategies. www.hamfish.org/programs/index.php3

Prevention and Early Intervention Web Page

The page is intended to provide prevention practitioners with information on best and promising practices. The goal is to reach professionals, consumers, and students across a range of disciplines, including mental health, education, special education, juvenile justice, and public policy. www.air.org/cecp/prev-ei/about.htm

Reviews of Prevention Research Database

This database comprises references and abstracts of English-language reviews of prevention research targeting children and/or adolescents. Most references are published journal articles, books, and book chapters. www.oslc.org/Pubs/exper.html

Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Expert Panel: Searching for the Best Programs

The purpose of the panel is to oversee a process for identifying and designating as promising and exemplary school-based programs that promote safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools. www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert_panel/drug-free.html

The Nuts and Bolts of Implementing School Safety Programs (PDF 352K)

A guide for teachers, principals, and school administrators trying to find the right school safety program. The manual identifies programs from around the country and describes the resources needed to implement each program. www.vera.org/PDF/nutsbolts.pdf

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

NRCSS Launches Intensive Training in Comprehensive Safe School Planning

During upcoming months, the National Resource Center for Safe Schools will conduct intensive training sessions with at least eight schools or school districts that are developing and implementing comprehensive safe school plans as part of overall school improvement.

The training sessions are geared specifically to schools or districts that have been identified as low performing by their states or that experience high needs, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education. Onsite sessions will include four to six training events, each lasting two to three days, for school safety planning teams. NRCSS will provide follow-up technical assistance after the events.

Training has already started at four sites: Newberg, Oregon; Gardiner, Maine; Swanton, Vermont; and Pine Ridge Schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Additional sites are expected to be named soon.

The intensive training is based on the Center's underlying belief that the creation of safe schools requires comprehensive efforts linked to the school improvement process. Training will use the NRCSS curriculum, *Creating Safe Schools: A Comprehensive Approach to Safe Schools Planning.*

Specialists from the NRCSS will use a training model that includes specific steps to create safe and effective learning environments:

- Awareness and involvement of staff, students, and community members
- Needs assessment, including gathering of data, listening to students, and surveying community members for concerns and ideas
- Developing a plan with measurable goals
- Implementing best practices, with training to support program implementation
- Evaluating progress

Zero Tolerance Too Harsh?

The American Bar Association (ABA) has taken a stance opposing zero tolerance policies in schools that do not consider specific circumstances or an accused student's history, saying the popular practice has "redefined students as criminals, with unfortunate consequences."

Citing examples of students being suspended or expelled for infractions involving paper clips or manicure tools, the ABA also noted that crime of all sorts is down at public schools. The 400,000-member association blamed media hype, fear of the unthinkable, and "perhaps even a bit of guilt" for overly strict and inflexible discipline policies.

A report from the ABA suggested that zero tolerance policies, while appearing to be neutral, have a disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities. "Zero tolerance means that Black students will be pushed out the door faster," the report asserted, citing evidence that African American students are already suspended or expelled at higher rates than their peers.

The ABA also cited findings from the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence that "the costs of zero tolerance policies outweigh the benefits," and pointed to "numerous alternatives," such as violence prevention programs.

Acknowledging that schools do face disciplinary problems and other challenges, the ABA argued for a return to "common sense" in place of one-size-fits-all policies. The report concluded: "It is easy to imagine school discipline policies that are grounded in common sense, and that are sensitive to student safety and the educational needs of all students. Such policies are the kind that most parents would want if their own children were being disciplined. Unfortunately, most current policies eliminate the common sense that comes with discretion and, at great cost to society and to children and families, do little to improve school safety."

For more information on zero tolerance policies, see the Spring 2000 issue of *The Safety Zone,* available online from the National Resource Center for Safe Schools (www.safetyzone.org).

PARIS—An international conference on school violence focused on school climate, bullying, and the culture of violence that extends beyond the schoolhouse as factors that can breed alienation in young people.

Sponsored by the European Observatory of School Violence, the conference took place in March—the same week that two shootings occurred at high schools in the United States.

Jerome Freiberg of the University of Houston told the Associated Press that large schools may be partly to blame for incidents of youth violence. Students need to become "citizens in their schools rather than tourists," he told the AP.

Other researchers attending the conference underscored the importance of creating a school climate of belonging, through such approaches as smaller learning communities and increased opportunities for students to bond with adults. Dr. Paul Kingery of the Hamilton Fish Institute was among the speakers to focus on violence prevention research. A session on intervention strategies focused on anti-bullying projects such as an initiative underway in Spain.

The European Observatory of Violence in Schools was founded in 1998 to study school violence and design and implement action research for violence prevention.

CALENDAR

June 28–30

Confronting Teasing and Bullying in the Elementary Grades: A Curriculum Approach, at Wellesley College Center for Research on Women in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Training provides a theoretical framework for understanding bullying as well as practical strategies for preventing bullying behaviors at school. Contact the Project on Teasing and Bullying by phone at (781) 283-2451. Web: www.wcwoline.org/bullying/staffdev.html.

July 8–9

Reducing School Violence: Community Involvement, in Toledo, Ohio. Sponsored by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), session focuses on communication between law enforcement officials and school administrators, and provides tools to start a school safety program. Contact IACP, 515 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: 1-800-THE-IACP. E-mail: balit@theiacp.org. Web: www.theiacp.org/training.

August 27–28

Reducing School Violence: Community Involvement, in Kent, Washington. See previous listing for more information.

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STATE SAFETY CENTERS CENTRALIZE RESOURCES

School districts trying to match available safety resources to local needs often feel overwhelmed by options, according to a national expert in violence prevention. Jeffrey Sprague of the University of Oregon Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior (IVDB) says state-based school safety centers can play an important role in centralizing resources and helping local districts create safer learning environments.

Since the mid-1990s, more than a dozen states have established school safety centers. While they vary in how they are organized and funded, the centers offer local schools single points of contact in each state for data, analysis, and technical training.

In July, the Oregon legislature gave the go-ahead to launch the newest state safety center. The Oregon Center for School Safety will be housed at the IVDB, which Sprague co-directs with prevention expert Hill Walker, and established within the state Department of Higher Education. In addition to providing schools with information and technical assistance, the Oregon center will streamline procedures for reporting school violence to generate more accurate data. It will be funded by public and private contributions.

The Oregon center will help districts develop school safety plans, now required by state law. The center plans to begin work this fall with two Oregon school districts as demonstration sites for anti-bullying programs. In addition, the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence has provided seed money to help the Oregon center assess the accuracy of school violence incident reporting from multiple perspectives, Sprague said.

Many Approaches

States have taken a variety of approaches to organize and operate their school safety centers. For example:

- New York draws on grant support from the governor's office, the state education department, the state attorney general, and the state department of health to operate the New York State Center for School Safety.
- Kentucky Center for School Safety is operated by a consortium of three state universities with the assistance of the Kentucky School Boards Association. (The Kentucky center is the organizational model for the new center in Oregon.)
- Texas School Safety Cen-

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POLICE IN CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA, LAY OUT EVIDENCE SEIZED FROM THE HOME OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT IN APRIL. POLICE INVESTIGATION WAS SPARKED BY A STUDENT WHO REPORTED HEARING RUMORS OF A BOMB THREAT. SEVERAL STATES HAVE SET UP HOTLINES FOR REPORTING SUCH TIPS. (AP PHOTO/STEPHEN MORTON)

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STATE: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ter is a collaborative effort of the governor's office/criminal justice division, the state attorney general's school violence prevention task force, and Southwest Texas State University.

Several state centers grew out of statewide task forces on youth violence and draw on the perspectives of local experts from fields such as education, juvenile justice, mental health, and law enforcement.

Beyond Information

In addition to filling the important role of information clearinghouse, state centers may also provide schools with training and technical assistance, help with creating crisis-response plans or more comprehensive school safety plans, or classroom resources for promoting school safety.

The Tennessee School Safety Center, for example, has collaborated with the Tennessee Bar Association to teach conflict resolution skills to teams from more than 450 schools to date. Peaceable Schools Tennessee provides three-day institutes where teachers, counselors, administrators, and school resource officers receive training in group problem-solving skills, mediation, and negotiation. From 1997, when the Peaceable Schools Tennessee initiative began, to 2000, the state has seen a 14 percent drop in suspension rates, according to the June 2001 issue of *Juvenile Justice Journal*.

The Pennsylvania Center for Safe Schools, in an effort to support creative and effective solutions to disruptive or violent behavior, has been awarding grants to schools throughout the state since 1995. During the 1999-2000 school year, grants for up to $20,000 were awarded to 54 school districts and charter schools, according to the center's Web page. An additional 25 school districts each received $2,500 to continue safe school activities begun during the 1998-99 school year.

In South Carolina, the Education Department's Office of Safe Schools helps local districts revise and update their safety plans, disciplinary procedures, and prevention strategies. Character education programs and bullying prevention are two strategies that are used increasingly to promote safe learning environments in South Carolina schools.

State Hotlines

Some of the state centers also operate telephone hotlines or Web sites for reporting school-related crimes or suspicious activities. Georgia established the first school safety hotline in 1998. The Web page allows students and other community members to report concerns related to school safety, including anonymous tips. The reports are then reviewed and, if necessary, followed up by the appropriate law enforcement agencies. The state also operates a toll-free phone hotline for reporting school safety concerns.

Eventually, the Oregon Center for School Safety will manage a toll-free hotline for reporting school-related crimes or suspicious activities.

For information about contacting school safety resource centers in specific states, see the Web page of the National Resource Center for Safe Schools (www.safetyzone.org).

SAFETY RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR LOAN

The following resources are just a few of the titles available for loan from the National Resource Center for Safe Schools' lending library to clients across the United States. Library materials may be requested by telephone, e-mail, or ordered from our Web site (www.safetyzone.org/library.html) by schools, law enforcement agencies, state and county agencies, and organizations with a verifiable address and phone number. Individuals may request materials by interlibrary loan through their local library. For further information, contact Resource Librarian Ira Pollack or Resource Specialist Ned Howard at 1-800-268-2275.

Responding to Hate Crime: A Multidisciplinary Curriculum for Law Enforcement and Victim Assistance Professionals

This curriculum is an updated and condensed version of the National Bias Crimes Training Manual. Multidisciplinary in nature, it provides instructors with all the materials needed to teach a course on responding to hate crime, including suggested activities, recommended videos, reproducible handouts and transparencies, and detailed background notes for trainers. It is designed to enhance the services that police and victim-assistance professionals provide to victims of hate crimes by providing information on the nature of hate crimes, hate crime indicators, appropriate actions to investigate and respond to such crimes, and effective ways of assisting victims

Hate Crime: Sourcebook for Schools

By Christina Bodinger-DeUriarte and Anthony R. Sancho, this sourcebook is divided into two sections. Part I provides information on the nature, scope, and sources of hate crime. Part II provides materials for use by schools and central district offices in curtailing hate crime

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SCHOOL SAFETY REPORT CARD RAISES AWARENESS

GUEST COLUMN

By Saul B. Wilen, Ruth N. Fagan, and Frederick Van Wert

Although Americans have experienced widespread media exposure of one school violence tragedy after another, the vast majority remain unaware of school safety issues and school safety efforts in their communities.

This is the preliminary finding from the School Safety Report Card National Awareness Project sponsored by International Horizons Unlimited, an educational and resources consortium. The goal of this Internet-based project (online at www.schoolsafetyreportcard.com) is to have 1 million or more Americans complete the report card as a tool for educating them about school safety issues. Participation has been so extensive that the goal is well on its way to being realized.

The School Safety Report Card© has become the largest survey performed to date using an Internet platform, the largest awareness initiative ever undertaken through a technology-based format, the largest data collection project in school safety issues, and one of the largest surveys ever undertaken in the history of the United States.

School Safety Issues

Critical safety issues facing our schools and communities interfere with the primary purpose of schools: educating students for the future. The safety of our children and of all students and staff in our schools is a personal health, a family health, community health, and a national public health issue. It is a primary responsibility for which we must all be held accountable. School safety impacts everybody in the community regardless of whether they currently have children in school.

Safe school environments are necessary to establish the sense of security and well-being required for both students and faculty to participate in effective education. It is difficult at best to learn if you do not feel safe; it is difficult to teach if you do not feel safe.

All stakeholders in the education process (including school administrators, teachers and other staff, counselors, students, parents, school board members, law enforcement, media, business people, taxpayers, government officials, and community residents in general) must be aware and involved. Stakeholders need to develop increased understanding of the factors that affect safety, which can include violence, suicide, drugs, alcohol, guns, gangs, physical and psychological security including bullying and harassment, and other dysfunctional and destructive behaviors.

Awareness is the first step in the establishment of a prevention foundation. Only after awareness is clearly defined can a prevention process be meaningfully instituted.

Report Card

The School Safety Report Card© is designed to give all stakeholders a voice to express their concerns about school safety and have them heard. The results will be posted on the Web site, sent to those who supply their e-mail addresses, and made available to the public, media, public leaders, agencies, and professional associations and organizations. The larger the participation nationally, the more meaningful will be the results.

Through enhancing the awareness of Americans about school safety, stimulating them to ask questions, fostering open communication, and encouraging their involvement in a community-school partnership in prevention, this awareness initiative will benefit schools and communities. The resulting database will be available for use in developing school safety planning on a school district, community, state, and national basis.

Prevention Process

The prevention process must focus upon proactive identification of students at risk for destructive behaviors, how these behaviors represent the students' attempts to meet their needs, and ongoing support to help students redefine and reframe how to safely meet their needs. Commitment by the entire school community and general community to the prevention process can fulfill the institutional responsibilities of schools while developing individual resilience and the creation of safe educational and community environments.

Resilience represents the ability to understand, control, and focus behavior and emotions. It is the source for adaptability and coping. It develops the sense of well-being and security to permit independent and responsible functioning. It is the basis for safety. Safety leads to trust, open communication, the need to affiliate appropriately, nonviolent problem solving, self-discipline, learning from one's mistakes, maturation, positive self-esteem, growth, and the positive value of human life which then in turn reinforces safety.

The School Safety Report Card©, intended to build awareness, is the first of four steps to increase school safety. The School Safety-Core Model© sets out the conceptual, behavioral, and psychological components that contribute to safe and unsafe environments, and the behavioral consequences that can result. It gives professionals and other stakeholders the tools for early identification of at-risk students and allows for early intervention with supportive programs and approaches. A Safety Issues Prevention and Education© Series provides understanding, proactive detection and intervention tools, the skills to create and implement prevention, leadership approaches, the application of

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AWARENESS IS THE FIRST STEP IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PREVENTION FOUNDATION. ONLY AFTER AWARENESS IS CLEARLY DEFINED CAN A PREVENTION PROCESS BE MEANINGFULLY INSTITUTED.

PARTNERS TEAM UP TO REDUCE HATE CRIMES

In an effort to create a safer environment for the nation's children, three leading organizations have created Partners Against Hate, a groundbreaking national hate crime prevention and intervention collaboration.

Partners Against Hate brings together the extensive experience of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Leadership Conference Education Fund (LCEF), and the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence (CPHV). Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, Partners Against Hate is a comprehensive program of outreach, education, and training to address hate violence initiated by youth.

The collaboration will feature an innovative collection of both online and offline resources and support. Partners Against Hate will coordinate its individual organizational experiences and broad-based networks to promote awareness of promising techniques to prevent, deter, and reduce juvenile hate-related behavior.

The partnership will employ the strategic use of communications technologies —namely the Internet—to build on existing hate crime prevention programs and make them more interactive, accessible, and sustainable. What's more, the project will give young people the understanding to recognize and reject hate propaganda published on the Internet.

The partners' extensive networks of contacts will allow for the broad distribution of resources and information designed to address youthful hate crime. The partners' professional experiences will allow diverse perspectives to be shared and will ensure the fullest range of input, participation, and strategic coordination of resource materials.

Project Goals

Goals of the project are to:

- Increase awareness of the problem of youth-initiated hate violence
- Share information about promising education and counteraction strategies for the wide range of community-based professionals who work and interact with young people, including parents, school personnel, youth service professionals, and law enforcement officials
- Help individuals working with youth better understand the potential of advanced communications technologies to break down cultural barriers and address bias

Resources

After conducting a comprehensive literature review and assessment of existing resources, the partners will prepare a guide for parents and educators. The guide will provide tools to engage in constructive discussions and activities about the causes and effects of prejudice and bias-motivated behavior and to intervene, when needed, with children who engage in such behavior.

Partners Against Hate will develop and maintain a comprehensive clearinghouse of hate crime-related information, resources, news reports, and counteraction tools. The Web site will also provide access to online training and technical assistance addressing bias-motivated behavior.

An interactive manual on hate on the Internet will equip parents, educators, and librarians with specific tools to help young people recognize and negotiate hate on the Internet. The manual will contain information to help young people, in association with their parents and teachers, to refine their critical-thinking skills regarding responsible use of the Internet, ultimately leading to rejection of online haters and their propaganda.

Training Programs

A training-of-trainers program targeting middle school audiences will provide participants with the knowledge and skills to conduct hate crime prevention programs for middle school students and teachers. The three-day program will result in a cadre of training teams capable of conducting workshops on preventing bias-motivated harassment and violence. These training teams will be supported with ongoing Web-based technical assistance.

Multidisciplinary regional training will include a comprehensive assessment of regional bias crime problems in a selected location and then provide specific guidance on promising and replicable prevention and intervention strategies that could positively influence that local environment.

A strategy and program guide for peer leader programs will provide parents and families, community members, educators, and law enforcement officials with blueprints for establishing middle and high school peer leader programs. These programs will be designed to give students the skills and confidence to become role models in confronting bias-motivated harassment and to stand up for civility in their schools and communities.

Training programs will educate state and federal policymakers and professionals by providing information about the national hate crime problem, active hate groups across the country, analysis of implementation of hate crimes laws in each state, analysis of rehabilitation programs in juvenile justice centers, and policy recommendations for each constituency.

Building a broad-based coalition and promoting training and technical assistance on a national level will aid in identifying and sharing promising practices and replicating success stories nationwide.

The Partners

The Anti-Defamation League (www.adl.org) is the leading source of current information on hate incidents and on recommending effective counteractive responses. ADL's model hate

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CASE STUDIES EXAMINE LOCAL PREVENTION EFFORTS

Two vastly different communities that are taking innovative steps to create safer, more effective learning environments are profiled in case studies published in July by the National Resource Center for Safe Schools.

When Peace Takes Precedence examines comprehensive efforts to improve the school climate in the Abington School District, which serves two suburban communities north of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *Weaving a Web of Support* explores how school-community partnerships in Palm Beach County, Florida, are resulting in expanded mental health services and early prevention resources for students in one of the nation's largest and most diverse counties.

The case studies are intended to offer other communities ideas and inspiration for using local resources to create safer learning environments. The stories offer real-world examples of why safe school planning must be tailored to fit local needs and involve not only schools but also community partners. The case studies examine challenges and outline strategies that have contributed to success.

Abington

Abington author Jennifer Fager describes a five-year effort to improve the school climate in a relatively affluent district with an enrollment of approximately 7,500 students. Since the mid-1990s, the Abington district has leveraged local resources and grant funds to introduce a variety of new programs that support the long-term vision of building a positive school climate to support student learning. Partnership with the local police department has been a key to the district's success. Other community partners also have been engaged in working with the school district.

As Fager concludes: "It wasn't on a given day of a given year that Abington's school safety efforts were implemented. Rather, it has been a continuous process of building, refining, and adapting." Although the efforts of educators and community members have resulted in a comprehensive safe school plan, including both prevention and intervention laspects, "they are not finished," Fager adds. "Even after so many years of effort, after numerous accolades, they still sit down together year after year and ask each other, 'How can we do better?'"

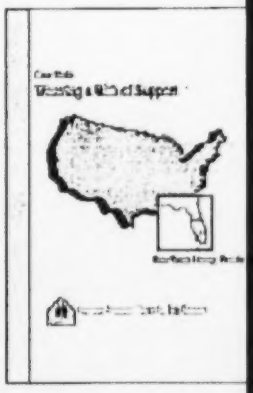
Palm Beach County

Serving 154,000 students in a region that covers some 2,000 square miles, the School District of Palm Beach County faces challenges that "should resonate with other communities that are seeing rapid population growth, increased diversity, increasing poverty rates for families with young children and, at the same time, pressure for all students to meet high academic standards within a safe school environment," reports Suzie Boss in the case study of Palm Beach County.

Weaving a Web of Support describes several school-community partnerships designed to improve access to student services, especially in the areas of mental health and early prevention. The case study describes the community-based agencies that are playing a key role in collaboration, then outlines three recent initiatives that show collaboration in action.

The sprawling district "has access to services hat would be impossible to duplicate in smaller or more rural communities," Boss reports. "However, the spirit of collaboration that's shaping this community is something from which others should be able to learn."

Copies of the case studies are available at no charge from the NRCSS. (See contact information on the back page of this newsletter.)



RESOURCES: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Healing the Hate: A National Bias Crime Prevention Curriculum for Middle Schools

Healing the Hate, by Karen A. McLaughlin and Kelly J. Brilliant, was designed for teachers in middle schools and for other professionals working with youth. The curriculum deals with the extent of hate crime in America and strategies that are proving effective in reducing hate crimes among our youth.

Hate-Motivated Behavior in Schools: Response Strategies for School Boards, Administrators, Law Enforcement, and Communities

This school-based resource guide, by Sherry McLaughlin and Mary Tobias Weaver, is designed to promote discussion, planning, immediate action, and effective long-term responses to hate-motivated incidents on campus.

REPORT CARD: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

educational principles, and motivational influences. A Total School Prevention Team© concept formalizes at a practical application level the development of community-school partnership efforts. Two viable adjunct programs that combine awareness, outreach, and partnership efforts include Schools and Communities Helping Parents© and Parents Helping Parents Helping Children.©

The Solution

The solution to violence is dependent on active choices that include being proactive versus being reactive, creating awareness, developing open communication, exploring the concerns of stakeholders, implementing prevention programs and processes, fostering change while monitoring effectiveness, and being willing to make indicated modifications along the way. Intervention, crisis management, and post-crisis closure are all necessary. However, such preparedness must be established and utilized within the context of a solid, ongoing, and always developing prevention foundation that will ultimately result in significantly reducing school safety problems. A major step in building the prevention foundation is through getting involved.

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PARTNERS: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

crimes statute has been enacted in 43 states and the District of Columbia. The league conducts hate crime seminars at local law enforcement training academies in a number of states. On the national level, ADL provides hate crimes seminars to law enforcement authorities, educators, attorneys, and community groups on effective strategies to identify, report, and respond to hate violence.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund (www.civilrights.org) has extensive experience and expertise in developing strategies and methodologies for reducing prejudice and promoting intergroup understanding within institutions, including schools, neighborhoods, and the workplace. LCEF enjoys a close relationship with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), the nation's oldest and most broadly based civil rights coalition. Within this broad coalition, LCEF is widely regarded as a leader with respect to its ability to leverage the power of technology to advance social change.

The Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence (www.cphv.usm.maine.edu) develops and implements prevention programs in middle and high schools, on college campuses, and for health care professionals. The center's workshops and programs provide both adults and students with an understanding of the destructive impact of degrading language and slurs, and with practical skills to effectively intervene in low-key ways that model respectful behavior.

For more information, contact:
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COLUMNISTS NEEDED

The Safety Zone publishes columns by students and guest experts dealing with school safety. While we cannot pay for articles, we do provide contributors with copies. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the editor by e-mail at safetyzoneeditor@nwrel.org, or call 1-800-268-2275.

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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Sites Added for Intensive Training

Specialists from the National Resource Center for Safe Schools have expanded intensive training efforts to include four additional school sites.

The newest school safety efforts are taking place in cooperation with school districts in Shiprock, New Mexico; Little Rock, Arkansas; Belgrade, Montana; and San Juan, Puerto Rico. These sites come in addition to training initiatives launched by the NRCSS earlier this year in cooperation with schools in Newberg, Oregon; Gardiner, Maine; Swanton, Vermont; and Pine Ridge Schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Participating schools are developing and implementing comprehensive safe school plans as part of overall school improvement efforts. Although projects will be tailored to meet local needs, they generally involve the steps outlined in the NRCSS curriculum, *Creating Safe Schools:*

- Developing partnerships
- Conducting needs assessments
- Developing the plan
- Implementing best practices programs
- Evaluating progress

Onsite sessions may include as many as six training events for school safety planning teams. NRCSS will provide follow-up for technical assistance after the events.

The training sessions are geared specifically to schools or districts that have been identified as low performing by their states or that experience high needs as defined by the U.S. Department of Education.

Shiprock

In Shiprock, New Mexico, the first of three training sessions has been scheduled for October 4-6. The session will be tailored to meet the needs of a newly formed districtwide school safety team. The team is made up of teachers, other school district employees, and representatives from the community, including social service and mental health agencies, law enforcement, and representatives of the Navajo nation. Because of the district's large geographic size, initial efforts will focus on developing safety plans for five of the district's 17 schools. NRCSS specialists will assist in assessing needs and identifying priorities for safe school plans.

Additional training sessions in Shiprock, scheduled for November 2-3 and November 30-December 1, will focus on identifying and implementing effective prevention and intervention strategies, and on maximizing community resources.

Journal Examines School Violence

The most recent issue of *Juvenile Justice,* a journal of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), takes a look at school violence from multiple perspectives, illustrating the complexity of the subject and the challenge of finding solutions.

The June 2001 publication opens with "School Violence: An Overview," in which authors Margaret Small, Ph.D., a consultant with the U.S. Department of Education, and Kellie Dressler Tetrick, Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program Coordinator at OJJDP, explain that researchers and practitioners "have not attained consensus on the nature and scope of the school violence problem." They point out that no standard set of indicators exists to describe school violence, making it difficult to aggregate data across schools. They compile data from a variety of sources to provide a starting point for understanding the scope of the problem.

"Creating Safe Schools: A Comprehensive Approach" outlines the 10 components that are essential for creating safe schools. NRCSS Resource Librarian Ira Pollack and NRCSS Director Carlos Sundermann coauthored the article, drawing on Center's work in the area of safe school planning. [A condensed version of the journal article appears as an insert in this issue of *The Safety Zone.*]

"Conflict Resolution Education: Preparing Youth for the Future" outlines the components of a conflict resolution education program. Authors Donna K. Crawford, Executive Director of the National Center for Conflict Resolution (NCCRE), and Richard J. Bodine, NCCRE Training Director, explain the potential of such programs to effect long-term change in student behavior.

The Web page of the NRCSS provides a link to the online version of the journal (go to www.safetyzone.org, then click on "What's New").

Youth Court Resources

Resources for youth courts and teen courts are available from the National Youth Court Center. To join the mailing list and obtain updated information produced by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, log on to www.youthcourt.net or e-mail NYCC@csg.org. Or, phone Scott Peterson at OJJDP at (202) 616-2368.

CALENDAR

September 20–22

National Conference on Advancing School-Based Programs, in Portland, Oregon. Sponsored by the Center for School Mental Health Assistance at the University of Maryland, the conference aims to have participants develop their knowledge of local, state, national, and international developments in school mental health and related topics. Phone: 1-888-706-0980. E-mail: csmha@psych.umaryland.edu.

October 4–5

Justice Statistics for Justice Policies in New Orleans. The national conference of the Bureau of Justice Statistics/Justice Research and Statistics Association will include sessions on hate crimes, gangs and gang violence, community collaborations on violence, and other topics of potential interest to educators with concerns about juvenile issues. Phone: (202) 842-9330. E-mail: kmaline@jrsa.org. Web: www.jrsa.org.

November 26–28

Governor's Conference on School Safety, Las Vegas, Nevada. Sponsored by the Nevada Division of Emergency Management and Nevada Department of Education. Contact: Division of Emergency Management, 2525 S. Carson Street, Carson City, NV 89701. Phone: (775) 687-4240. Web: www.dem.state.nv.us/schoolconference.htm.

February 16–19

National Youth Summit on Preventing Violence in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the National Crime Prevention Council, summit offers youth a chance to voice their ideas on reducing violence. Web: www.ncpc.org/summit/index.html.

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THE SafetyZone

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 3 | FALL 2001

IN YOUTH COURTS, TEENS HOLD TEENS ACCOUNTABLE

By Violet Colydas and Scott Peterson

CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS

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Billy, 14, and Patty, 13, get caught stealing a CD from a music store. They admit their guilt to the arresting officer, who presents them with a choice: Do they want to be sentenced by a jury of their peers—including other teenagers who've made some poor choices and learned from their mistakes? Or head into the formal juvenile justice system where an adult judge will determine their punishment?

For an increasing number of communities, youth courts are providing a positive alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system. Since 1994, the number of programs across the country has grown from 78 to more than 800, with another 100 in development, according to the National Youth Court Center. Researchers are finding that youth courts not only help divert cases away from the crowded juvenile system, but also may promote self-esteem and foster a healthy attitude toward rules and authority among youthful offenders.[1] Peer pressure—which can be a risk factor for delinquency—is used by youth courts to exert a powerful, positive influence over adolescent behavior.

In the case of "Billy" and "Patty," for instance (provided as an example by the U.S. Department of Justice Kids Page, online at www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/getinvolved/4_4.htm), the guilty teens received a sentence of 35 hours of community service. The youth court jurors also ordered them to write a letter of apology to their victim, the music store owner. Once their sentence was completed, they were no longer involved in the justice system—unless, that is, they chose to serve their community by becoming youth court volunteers themselves.

Joint Ventures

In most communities, youth courts operate as a joint venture among several agencies, including schools, police departments, probation departments, juvenile and family courts, and not-for-profit organizations. The most successful youth courts, according to researchers, are based in the community and include participation from a wide range of organizations and agencies.[2]

Youth court proceedings involve a youthful offender, youth jurors, and youth members in roles that may include judge, prosecutor, defender, clerk/bailiff, and jury foreperson.

Cases are generally referred by judges, police, probation officers, and schools to the adult coordinator who oversees the program. Typical cases that may be heard in youth court include larceny, criminal mischief, vandalism, minor assault, possession of alcohol, minor drug offenses, and truancy.

Positive Peer Pressure

Youth courts give communities an opportunity to provide immediate consequences for first-time youthful offenders. What's more, youth courts provide a peer-operated sentencing mechanism that constructively allows young people to take responsibility, be held accountable, and make restitution for committing a crime or violation of law.

Not all teens who get involved in youth courts are offenders. In addition to providing constructive consequences for juvenile offenders, youth courts also offer a civic opportunity for other

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CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS IS PERSONAL ISSUE FOR NEW DIRECTOR

Rex Hagans, who in October was named acting director of the National Resource Center for Safe Schools, brings an extensive background in educational research along with teaching and school administration.

"Safe schools are also a personal issue for me," adds Hagans, who joined the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in 1968 after working as a teacher and serving as a public school administrator and school counselor in Oregon and Iowa. "I have seven kids—four of them teachers—and 11 grandchildren. I look forward to the chance to contribute to making schools safer."

THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11 "MADE US EVEN MORE AWARE OF THE NEED TO HELP CHILDREN DEAL WITH FEELINGS OF BEING UNSAFE."

The National Resource Center for Safe Schools, in its first three years of operation, "has done a lot of good work," Hagans says. "I plan to continue to do that. The resource part is especially important—that 'R' in NRCSS is very key."

Since the September 11 terrorism attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., the issue of safety has come into sharper focus for the entire country. "It's made us even more aware of the need to help children deal with feelings of being unsafe," he says. The NRCSS has seen a spike in requests for information "about how to help children handle those feelings," he says.

As the nation grapples with new challenges related to terrorism, schools will be facing an increasing need for information about technology related to security and other aspects of safe school planning. "A key question will be how to protect people without destroying the civil rights of others," Hagans says.

Schools can play an important role by providing programs that foster cross-cultural understanding. "There's a push to understand people of all backgrounds, from all the different cultures of the world. We're hearing a lot of discussion about the importance of coming together," Hagans says, "and making sure we include everyone."

These aren't new themes for most schools, he admits. But their importance is greater than ever. "The last thing we want is for children and young people to be growing up scared. Some kids may have had reasons to feel less than safe in the past," he acknowledges, "but this has brought the importanc safety home to all of us."

Hagans was previously acting direct of the National Mentoring Center, a located at the Northwest Regional E cational Laboratory in Portland, Ore Earlier in his career, he was directo Planning and Program Development NWREL and was instrumental in lea large regional and national research velopment, and service programs in areas of early childhood education, vice learning, school-to-work transi Indian education, and comprehensi school reform. He holds a doctorate school administration from the Uni sity of Iowa and a master's in couns from the University of Oregon.

Carlos Sundermann, previously dire of the NRCSS, has assumed new re sponsibilities at the Northwest Reg Educational Laboratory, where he is a unit manager in the area of Planni and Program Development. "Carlos longtime friend and colleague," add Hagans, "and I wish him the best."

DONAHUE APPOINTED ACTING ADMINISTRATOR OF OJJDP

Terrence S. Donahue has been appointed by the president to serve as the acting administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Resource Center for Safe Schools is jointly funded by OJJDP and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program of the U.S. Department of Education.

Donahue has served in a number of senior management positions during his more than 25 years with the Office of Justice Programs and the Department of Justice.

As acting administrator, Donahue is responsible for the agency that Congress has mandated to address the public safety issues of juvenile crime and youth victimization. His OJJDP leadership responsibilities include identifying effective strategies for addressing juvenile crime through research; coordinating, implementing, and supporting effective programs and encouraging innovative approaches to deal with existing and emerging juvenile justice issues; developing priorities and goals and setting policies to guide federal juvenile justice issues; providing technical assistance and training to essential components of the juvenile justice system; disseminating information on juvenile justice trends, programs, and new approaches; and awarding funds to states to support local programming nationwide.

Previously, Donahue supervised the velopment and testing of the Sustain Safety and Community Enhancemen initiative, a national prototype progra improve the coordination and conce tration of federal, state, and local pu and private resources in sustained l term responses to crime and relate social problems without startup fed discretionary funds and "Resource Mapping and Strategic Planning Soft Tool," a related software package.

Before coming to Washington, D.C., Donahue directed and worked in a nu of state and local criminal and juven justice and public welfare planning a service delivery organizations in Ind

CLOSE UP: COLONIE YOUTH COURT

Located in the Town of Colonie in Albany, New York, Colonie Youth Court was established in December 1993 and has since become one of the most highly regarded such programs in the country. In 1996, it was selected to serve as the model for an additional 50 youth court programs in New York state. Through the Colonie program, young people not only serve on juries, but also fill the roles of judge, attorney, and clerk/bailiff. The youth court annually involves more than 500 young people who volunteer to serve as judges, defenders, prosecutors, clerks, jury foreperson, and jurors.

Since 1995, the Colonie Youth Court has adjudicated more than 650 juvenile cases for disposition and has a 99 percent successful completion rate.

A volunteer board of directors oversees the youth court. The board includes members from a variety of agencies and organizations, including the police department, probation department, local schools, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of New York.

Answers to commonly asked questions about the program are provided here by Violet Colydas, program director of Colonie Youth Court since 1997, and Scott Peterson, program officer with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.

How is the program funded?

The Colonie program operates on an annual budget of $70,000 and includes a full-time program director and a part-time community service coordinator. The budget is provided through grants by the state and county bar associations, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Office of Children and Family Services, and the Town of Colonie, which is the largest municipality in the Capital District of New York. Colonie Youth Court was established as a demonstration program with state formula funds from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

What is the program goal?

The goal of the Colonie Youth Court is to intervene in early antisocial, delinquent, and criminal behavior, and to reduce the incidence and prevent the escalation of such behavior. Colonie Youth Court strives to promote feelings of self-esteem and a desire for self-improvement, and to foster a healthy attitude toward rules and authority.

What happens in the Colonie Youth Court?

The court is a voluntary alternative to the criminal justice system for young people who have committed a crime or an offense. In youth court, a youth who has admitted guilt to a crime or an offense appears for a sentencing hearing before a jury of peers. The jury is presented with evidence relevant to sentencing, deliberates, and passes sentence. Sentences typically include community service and counseling, and stress rehabilitative goals.

Who participates in Colonie Youth Court proceedings?

Youth court proceedings often involve a juvenile offender, volunteer youth jurors, and trained youth court members in the roles of judge, prosecutor, defender, clerk/bailiff, and jury foreperson. Each of these individuals is typically under age 18. An adult serves as a program director/coordinator.

The offender must complete the sentence imposed by the jury, and in addition, must agree to serve as a juror as the final two hours of community service on the case of another youth offender.

How are the jurors selected?

In addition to the juvenile offenders who serve on youth court juries as part of their community service, the remaining jurors are randomly selected from a pool of about 450 youth in grades seven through 12 who have volunteered to serve on a jury.

Do jurors receive training?

Jurors do not take a course of instruction. Rather, they typically hear and see the evidence, listen to instructions from the judge, retire and deliberate in private, and agree on a sentence.

What training do youth court members receive?

Members of the Colonie Youth Court consist of young people in grades nine through 12 who have successfully completed eight weeks of a youth court membership training program. Areas of instruction include an overview of the criminal and juvenile justice system, causes of crime and delinquency, goals of sentencing, penal law, and operation of youth court. The training program concludes with mock hearings to prepare members for participation in youth court proceedings.

What roles do youth court members play?

Colonie Youth Court members assume five roles on a rotating basis. These include:

- Judge: Presides over the sentencing hearing, explains the criminal charge to the jury, instructs the jury on what evidence and factors to consider in determining a sentence, and sentences the offender in accordance with the jury's verdict.
- Prosecutor: Represents the interests of the people of the community, investigates the circumstances of the offense and background of the offender, presents evidence at the sentencing hearing, and makes a sentencing

Please see COLONIE, Page 4

COLONIE: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

recommendation to the jury.
- Defender: Represents the interests of the offender, investigates the circumstances of the offense and background of the offender, presents evidence at the sentencing hearing, including mitigating evidence, and makes a sentencing recommendation to the jury.
- Clerk/Bailiff: Maintains accurate records of court proceedings, ensures smooth operation of court, and administers oaths.
- Jury Foreperson: Leads deliberations of the jury, ensures participation of all jurors, and that all appropriate sentencing factors are addressed, mediates disputes among jurors, calls for a vote during deliberations, and announces the jury's verdict.

What are the benefits for youth who participate?

Volunteer youth members who serve in these youth court roles gain valuable knowledge and skills that strengthen their ability to become responsible citizens during adolescence and into adulthood. As a result of their participation in youth court, these youth often have improved articulation, social, and application skills. Volunteer service in youth court is increasingly being seen as an opportune area when schools require youth to complete a particular number of community service hours for graduation from high school. As a result of the many benefits youth gain through volunteer participation in youth court, some schools provide a half semester of high school social studies credit for two consecutive years of participation.

What criteria must offenders meet to be eligible for youth court?

Youth offenders of the Colonie Youth Court must be younger than age 18, admit guilt, and have committed their first misdemeanor and/or violation. As a final component of his or her community service, each offender is required to serve as a juror on a subsequent case heard in youth court. This allows for positive participation by the offender in the criminal justice system. Offenders gain valuable lessons through being able to accept responsibility for their actions by participating in community service projects and educational classes, and by hearing their peers send a strong message that they displayed poor judgment.

What types of cases are handled in the Colonie Youth Court?

Cases appropriate for youth court are generally referred by judges, police, probation, and school officials to the youth court coordinator, who accepts cases meeting established criteria. Youth court programs accept a wide range of cases for disposition. Determining the types of cases a youth court will handle is the decision of the organizers of the program in collaboration with the local school, court, and police and probation departments. Most cases handled in youth court include violations and misdemeanors, and some nonviolent felonies.

Typical cases that may be handled in youth court include shoplifting/theft, illegal alcohol possession, criminal mischief, vandalism/property damage, possession of small amounts of marijuana, traffic offenses, disorderly conduct, and other offenses deemed appropriate.

Are any cases not typically considered for youth court?

Yes. These include felony crimes, violent and sexual crimes, driving under the influence of alcohol, and distribution and/or felony possession of narcotics.

What types of sentences does the Colonie Youth Court jury impose?

Sentences vary for each youth court. Community resources, program development, age and background of the offender, and the type of crime are some factors that may contribute to the sentence. Some youth court programs have a limit for the number of community service hours that can be imposed for a particular crime; others, such as the Colonie Youth Court, do not set a limit. Some programs operate their own community service program during the evenings and on Saturdays, while other programs utilize existing community service agencies for monitoring completion of community service hours assigned. Typical community service sentences imposed in youth court include community service, letters of apology, essays, youth court jury duty, restitution, and/or participation in educational awareness classes. The jury cannot sentence youth to a detention facility or jail.

What benefits are obtained and what rights are waived by youthful offenders?

By agreeing to proceed in the Colonie Youth Court, an offender obtains certain benefits, and waives certain rights that would otherwise attach in the criminal and juvenile justice system. Benefits include a decision by a jury of peers aimed at assisting the young person in desisting from criminal conduct, and an opportunity to participate positively in the criminal and juvenile justice system, rather than as the object of that system. Rights waived in youth court may include the right to an attorney and to a trial for determination of guilt.

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COURTS: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

young people in the community. Youth volunteers actively participate in the community decisionmaking processes for dealing with juvenile delinquency as they gain hands-on knowledge of the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Youth court utilizes peers to determine the appropriate sentence of other youth, a critical aspect of the program. If peer pressure contributes to juvenile delinquency, some experts have taken the view that it can be redirected to become a force leading juveniles into law-abiding behavior.[3]

Youth court is increasingly seen as an effective means for holding youth accountable for delinquent and criminal behavior within the community. Hundreds of thousands of young people have opted to become a part of youth court in past years. By all indications, officials only see this number increasing at a rate consistent with the rapid establishment of youth courts.

Violet Colydas serves as program director of the Colonie Youth Court in Albany, New York.

Scott B. Peterson is a program officer with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Notes

1 Lockart, P.S., Pericak, W.C., & Peterson, S.B. (1996). Youth court: The Colonie, New York, experience. *Journal for Juvenile Justice and Detention Services, 11*(2), 79–82.

2 Godwin, T.M. (with Heward, M.E., & Spina, T., Jr.). (2000). *National youth court guidelines.* Lexington, KY: American Probation and Parole Association, National Youth Court Center.

3 Williamson, D., Chalk, M., & Knepper, P. (1993). Teen court: Juvenile justice for the 21st century. *Federal Probation, 57*(2), 54–58.

COLONIE: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Is there an average budget for operating a youth court program?

Because of the large number of volunteer youth and adults who assist in the operation of youth courts, these programs are among the least expensive intervention and prevention programs. Most youth court programs employ one person. Annual youth court budgets vary widely, ranging from $10,000 to $150,000. Factors that contribute to the youth court budget include:

- Size of the jurisdiction to be served by the youth court
- Crime rates within the community
- Availability of other diversion programs for first-time offenders
- Whether the youth court operates its own community service program
- How the program is organized (i.e., as a not-for-profit, school, or municipal organization)
- How often the court convenes and estimated number of cases to be handled

Youth Court Resources

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention created the National Youth Court Center in 1999, with additional support from the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration. The National Youth Court Center is operated by the American Probation and Parole Association in Lexington, Kentucky. Its main purpose is to support the national infrastructure of youth courts by serving as an information clearinghouse, providing training and technical assistance, and developing resource materials to assist jurisdictions in developing and operating effective youth court programs. The National Youth Court Center also provides subcontracts to three agencies—American Bar Association, Constitutional Rights Foundation (Chicago), and Street Law, Inc.—to assist in the development of youth court resources.

For more information contact:

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Scott Peterson, Youth Court Program Manager
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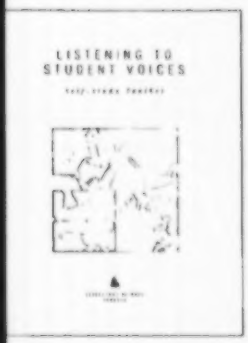
E-mail: nycc@csg.org
Web: www.youthcourt.net

STUDENTS' INPUT VITAL TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

By Denise Jarrett Weeks



If you want to know, you have to ask. Asking students what they think—about their school, about learning, and about how adults can help—can transform a school's improvement efforts. Posing questions like, What helps you learn? When do you feel most safe? Most valued?, can prompt answers that reveal the clearest picture of a school—its strengths and shortcomings—and what students really need to succeed. Today, educators are seeing the value of including student voices in the adult realm of decisionmaking.

A new toolkit, *Listening to Student Voices,* brings together a variety of resources to make the listening process easier and more productive for school communities engaging in self-study.

"Teachers often feel that because they spend their entire day with students, they are already in touch with student concerns," says Joan Shaughnessy, Senior Associate for the School Improvement Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). "But when their school uses these tools, students step forward to talk about their day-to-day experiences in very compelling ways. With a heightened awareness of underlying issues, the students and teachers begin to tackle the deep issues interfering with their school's productivity."

Shaughnessy is one of the toolkit developers from the School Change Collaborative, a group of Regional Educational Laboratories working with K–12 school partners across the country as part of a national Laboratory Network Program. The toolkit is designed to help K–12 educational leaders and school-based teams invite students' input into school reform, bringing school communities together to improve student learning. Schools can easily add these tools and techniques to their ongoing comprehensive school reform efforts.

An Introductory Package includes a brochure, guidebook, school stories, and a 10-minute videotape that provides an overview of the kit and testimonies from teachers and students. The complete Self-Study Toolkit includes a set of guidebooks, videotapes, school stories, and handouts for all four self-study techniques: Data in a Day, Structured Reflection Protocol, Student-Led Focus Groups, and Analyzing Surveys With Kids.

Oregon's North Salem High School is one of the schools to contribute to the development of the kit. Former Principal Mike Kolb says: "Our kids constantly amaze us. They are as capable as we are. They lack some of our experiences, but, intellectually, they have tremendous capacity if they're given enough time and opportunity."

Data in a Day allows a school to involve students and teachers in gathering data on an issue that is important to both groups. Students and teachers pair up to observe classrooms during one day, recording their observations, and presenting their findings to the school. The findings are then incorporated into school reform plans.

One student reports: "When we all sat down at the end of the day and talked—as teachers and students, adults and kids—it was a very mutual, very high-respect environment .... We want teachers to know that we can contribute good ideas to improve our school."

Structured Reflection Protocol is a method for examining and talking about student work. It can be used by students or staff to explore what helps students to learn. Participants analyze student work, forming analysis teams and feedback teams that work together to promote self-study, reflection, and strategies for improvement.

The Student-Led Focus Groups tool enables adults to hear from students and to apply what they hear. The school generates questions for students to respond to, such as, What do good teachers do? What makes a good student? What would make this school a better place? These discussions put students' perspectives at the center of a meeting, making them active contributors to school planning.

In this approach, students sit in a circle in a room and discuss the questions, with a peer facilitator. Adults sit in an outer circle, observing and listening to the students but allowing them to manage the flow of their own discussion. When the discussion is over, students and adults switch places, and the adults talk about what they heard.

Analyzing Surveys With Kids is a step-by-step process for engaging students in the survey process. Students contribute their knowledge about the school to help design surveys, interpret survey results, and formulate recommendations for improvement.

Dennis Sizemore, Principal of Fairview Elementary near Portland, Oregon, notes: "To include students, we have to listen to them. If we don't listen to them, there's a void in the process of change."

The Listening to Student Voices Self-Study Toolkit can help educators make meaningful changes by inviting and making use of the critical insights students can share about what it takes to enhance schools for everyone.

For more information about the Listening to Student Voices Self-Study Toolkit, visit the School Change Collaborative Web site <www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/codev.html> or contact Joan Shaughnessy, School Improvement Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, Oregon 97204-3297; e-mail shaughnj@nwrel.org.

STUDENT VOICES ON SCHOOL SAFETY

By Cindy Workman

NRCSS staff members have worked with several intensive training sites to provide guidance on how to include students in developing comprehensive school safety plans. To date, three sites have been successful in forming student advisory groups that have participated in the safe school planning process. All of these sites have utilized the *Listening to Student Voices* toolkit as a method of engaging students.

At the training site in Gardiner, Maine, a Youth Advisory Group made up of high school students participated in a focus group where they were asked to share their opinions and concerns regarding school safety issues. Care was taken to include students who were representative of the entire school, not just those in leadership positions. The group also received training on school safety issues and on how to conduct student-led focus groups. They then conducted focus groups with fourth- and fifth-graders in each of the district's elementary schools. The goal was to determine how much bullying was occurring in the schools, and to get students' ideas about how it might be decreased. The elementary students responded openly to the high school youth, and thanked them for coming and hearing their concerns. They even asked them to come back and help them talk about other issues, noting that it was easier to talk to them than to adults.

Because of the success of this project, the Youth Advisory Group conducted similar focus groups with middle school and high school students. They also participated in the Data in a Day exercise, in which they recorded the number of incidents of bullying, harassment, and violence that they observed at school and on school buses during one day. The Youth Advisory Group compiled results and summarized the opinions and suggestions from all the student-led focus groups. Then they presented their findings and recommendations to the task force that had been organized to address school safety issues in the district. In addition, they participated in a community forum and presented their report to community members, fielding questions from the adults. Behavior indicative of bullying and harassment was observed at all grade levels, with incidents on the school bus being of greatest concern.

Students were surprised and dismayed over their findings from the Data in a Day exercise. They concluded that they had been somewhat numb to the day-to-day incidents of bullying and harassment that were taking place. Paying close attention to how students interacted with each other on one particular day raised their awareness about the overall climate of the school, and they were able to share their concerns with school personnel and other members of the community.

The task force was able to use this information, along with additional data compiled in a comprehensive needs assessment, to develop a school safety action plan for this school year. That plan includes implementation of a bullying prevention program, taking steps toward increasing school bus safety, and using community resources to develop more prevention and early intervention programs.

BEHAVIOR INDICATIVE OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT WAS OBSERVED AT ALL GRADE LEVELS, WITH INCIDENTS ON THE SCHOOL BUS BEING OF GREATEST CONCERN.

WEB RESOURCES FOR INVOLVING YOUTH

☐ **12 Things Students Can Do To Stop School Violence**
www.ncpc.org/2schvio2.htm

☐ **DoSomething.org**
Do Something is a nationwide network of young people who know they can make a difference in their communities and take action to change the world around them. www.dosomething.org/

☐ **National Campaign Against Youth Violence**
This site includes a section on what youth can do to stop violence. www.noviolence.net/

☐ **National Youth Leadership Council**
As one of America's most prominent advocates of service learning and youth service, NYLC is at the forefront of efforts to reform education and guide youth-oriented public policy. www.nylc.org/

☐ **National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center**
The center helps young people find information about violence, including how to prevent it. www.safeyouth.org/teens/

☐ **Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.)**
Students learn about alternatives to violence and practice what they learn. www.nationalsave.org

☐ **The Student Pledge**
The Student Pledge Against Gun Violence encourages young people to take an active stance in reducing gun violence. www.pledge.org

☐ **Youth as Resources**
Youth as Resources is a community-based program that provides small grants to young people to design and carry out service projects. www.yar.org/

☐ **Youth Crime Watch**
The YCW program empowers youth to take an active role in addressing the problems around them. www.ycwa.org/

CALENDAR

November 26–28

Governor's Conference on School Safety, Las Vegas, Nevada. Sponsored by the Nevada Division of Emergency Management and Nevada Department of Education. Conference is geared for district boards of education, administrators, students, faculty and other staff, emergency managers, emergency responders, and other community members. Contact: Division of Emergency Management, 2525 S. Carson Street, Carson City, NV 89701. Phone: (775) 687-4240. Web: www.dem.state.nv.us/schoolconference.htm

December 11

Mississippi Institute for School Safety, Threat Assessment Protocol Workshop, Hinds Community College—Rankin Campus, Pearl, Mississippi. One in a series of workshops on school safety, this session provides a protocol for dealing with threats issued by students. Contact Office of Safe and Orderly Schools, P.O. Box 771, Jackson, MS 39205. Phone: (601) 350-1028.

February 16–19

National Youth Summit on Preventing Violence, Washington, D.C. Sponsored by National Crime Prevention Council, summit offers youth a chance to voice their ideas about reducing violence. Summit includes training sessions, offsite educational field trips, and roundtable discussions. Web: www.ncpc.org/summit/index.html. E-mail: youthsummit@ncpc.org.

The Safety Zone
The newsletter of the National Resource Center for Safe Schools

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THE SafetyZone

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 4 | WINTER 2001

THREAT OF BIOTERRORISM RESHAPING SCHOOL SAFETY PLANS

CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS

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5 New Study

8 Calendar

OPERATED BY:

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SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS PROGRAM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

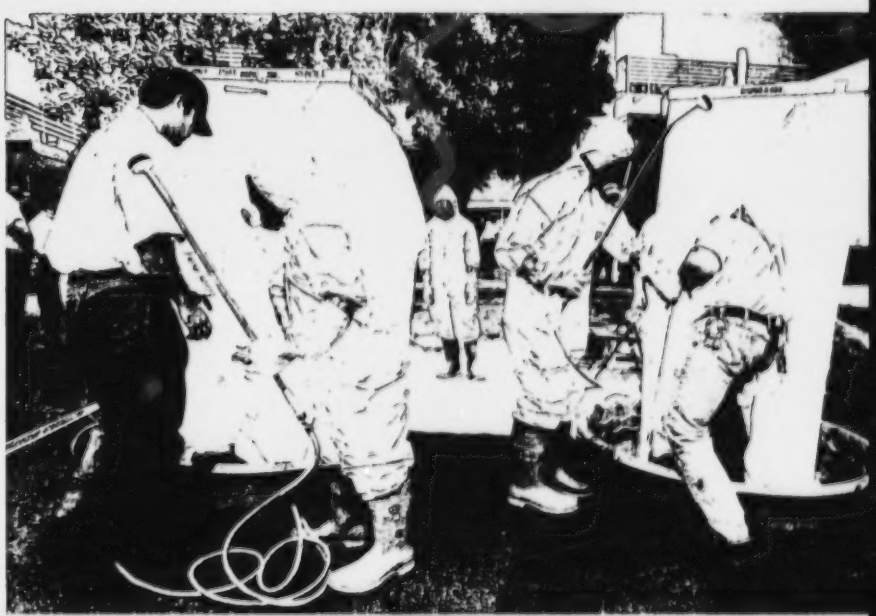
OJJDP

OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

School officials responsible for safety concerns have found themselves navigating a strange new world since the recent national tragedies. In Kentucky, a janitor arrived at school early one morning and found an envelope spilling white powder in a hallway. In Colorado, a 10-year-old boy hoping to trigger an early dismissal brought to school a film canister full of a powdery substance. Across the country, numerous schools and colleges have had their routines disrupted by similar hoaxes.

Since the first anthrax case was reported in October, school officials have been scrambling to revise their crisis-response plans. Bioterrorism, a threat most educators never imagined would affect their campuses, requires new thinking about how schools should respond, which agencies to enlist for help, and how to separate hoaxes from reality.

Rex Hagans, interim director of the National Resource Center for Safe Schools, advises schools to make sure they have "the best possible lines of communication with their local first responders —police, fire departments, and health officials."



UCLA HAZMAT RESPONSE UNIT MEMBERS, DRESSED IN PROTECTIVE GEAR, WALK FICTITIOUSLY CONTAMINATED UCLA WORKERS INTO A DECONTAMINATION SHOWER OUTSIDE THE UCLA MEDICAL CENTER IN LOS ANGELES. THE DRILL, CONDUCTED IN NOVEMBER, IS PART OF THE COUNTY'S BIOTERRORISM PREPAREDNESS EXERCISE. (AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES)

Hagans also acknowledges that much of the information schools need is still being sorted out by medical experts, public health officials, and law enforcement agencies. To help schools find the most recent information on responding to bioterrorism, the NRCSS has updated its Web page to include new resources. (Go to the NRCSS home page, www.safetyzone.org, then click on the link for "Responding to Biological and Chemical Emergencies.")

Sharing Resources

Although the chances of schools facing a real bioterrorism event may appear slim at this point, schools are moving forward aggressively to craft emergency response plans for incidents involving exposure to anthrax or other biological hazards. In many states, school safety centers are playing a key role in gathering and disseminating information.

Lawrence Township school district in the Indianapolis area was among the first in

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THREAT: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the country to revise existing safety plans with an eye to biological and chemical threats, according to *Education Week* ("Schools Plan Responses to Bioterrorism," October 31, 2001). The Indiana School Safety Specialist Academy has posted the Lawrence Township emergency-response plan on the Web site of the state department of education (ideanet.doe.state.in.us/isssa/lawrencegdlsanthrax.html).

Kentucky Center for School Safety has assembled new resources on its Web page to help schools prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises. Drawing on recommendations from Vic Mandrillo, regional coordinating manager of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Kentucky center has developed a "School Terrorism Action Plan," including protocols for responding to biological weapons.

As the Kentucky plan indicates, rumor control must be part of a school's response: "Perhaps the first step in prudent decisionmaking in emergencies involves the securing of reliable information. It is important to be able to quickly separate rumor from reality." The plan underscores the importance of enlisting a medical expert for advance planning, rather than waiting until the middle of a crisis to seek help.

Kentucky safety experts also caution that awareness of an actual biological attack may not take place "for days or weeks. The first signs may emerge as primary care doctors and emergency room personnel notice a higher than usual incidence of various types of symptoms." If an attack is discovered while it is still in progress, schools should immediately shut down all heating and ventilating systems, and secure buildings by closing windows and doors. "Immediate evacuation offers little or no advantage," the plan cautions. "It would be most logical to stay inside campus buildings and allow parents to pick up their children at their own discretion."

Threats by Mail

Because recent anthrax cases have been traced to tainted letters, school officials are taking new precautions with mail deliveries. Karen Franklin, a crisis management consultant, has prepared a set of protocols (posted on the NRCSS Web site) to help schools identify mail hoaxes and respond to real threats.

Franklin underscores the importance of school personnel remaining calm if confronted with a suspicious-looking letter or package. "Remember that anthrax exposure is treatable and is not an immediate threat to a victim's life," she writes. While waiting for public safety experts to arrive, she adds, "refrain from biting your fingernails, rubbing your eyes, and other things that are commonly associated with stress reactions. You do not want to risk inadvertently ingesting this material into your system."

Franklin also cautions against transporting a suspicious-looking letter. "Do not run down a hallway or directly to a principal's office," she warns. Instead, "put the letter down and back away. If possible, immediately close and lock the doors and windows to the office or classroom in order to isolate yourself and others who may have been exposed."

The next step is to call for emergency help (9-1-1), and allow public safety experts to lead the response efforts.

School safety planning should consider how and where to reunite students with their families after an event. Informing those who may have been exposed to a biohazard is also critical. "Many times victims are unaware of the consequences of being exposed to anthrax," Franklin notes, adding that accurate medical information can "ease victims' minds."

For additional information on helping students recover from crisis, see the Resources section on Page 6 of this newsletter.

MAKING SCHOOL SAFER: ONE SCHOOL'S EXPERIENCE

GUEST COLUMN

By Richard Lawrence

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, Minnesota—School administrators and teachers devote a large part of their time responding to disruptions and threats from students. Educators in Columbia Heights, a suburb of Minneapolis, recently teamed up with the local police department to reduce the incidence of threats and promote school safety.

School administrators and police officials had become concerned about an increase in phone calls about threats and assaults in the neighborhood around Columbia Heights High School. Many fights and threats could be traced to incidents that started during school hours. The incidents not only caused harm to assault victims, but also meant that police and school staff needed to spend more time monitoring and supervising school hallways, lunch rooms, and other places where students congregate. More law enforcement resources were required for patrols when students were going to and from school. The assaults also created a negative perception of the high school and the surrounding neighborhood. Parents were afraid for their children's safety, and many students avoided places in the school and the neighborhood out of fear of being victimized.

With the assistance of federal funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Police Sergeant John Rogers and Chief Tom Johnson developed the School Partnership Project in collaboration with Columbia Heights High School. Goals of the project were to assess the extent and nature of school crime problems and develop appropriate action plans to respond.

Getting a Clear Picture

A crime analyst and project coordinator, Michelle Steichen, was hired at the start of the 2000–2001 school year to work closely with school staff members and students. She collected information on all disciplinary incidents and suspension reports and administered confidential surveys to a representative sample of students.

In the surveys, students reported numerous threats and assaults. They noted where and when the incidents occurred, along with their perceived reasons for the threats or assaults. Students also suggested several disciplinary responses to reduce school crime and violence. Steichen also gathered information from teachers and other staff members. She asked about their perception of safety at the school; their victimization experiences; and their suggestions for the most appropriate disciplinary measures to reduce disturbances, threats, and crime at the high school.

School Safety Plans

Guided by the information obtained about school assault incidents and the findings of the student and staff surveys, the school has developed seven safety plan proposals. They include:

- **Increasing supervision:** By increasing the presence of teachers and other staff members in the hallways, the school expects to help decrease student misbehavior and incidence of assault. Direct supervision of students has been shown to be effective in preventing threats and assaults.
- **Monitoring student behavior:** The school has developed monitoring forms to follow up on reported disciplinary incidents and notify teachers, parents and, when appropriate, the county attorney. The goal is to increase students' accountability for disruptive and violent behavior by continuing to monitor their behavior after incidents are reported.
- **Encouraging student reporting:** Students often know about problems before events come to the attention of teachers and administrators, but students may need to be encouraged to share warnings or information about their classmates. The goal is to remind students of their role in reducing school crime and to create an atmosphere that encourages students to report incidents of bullying, threats, or assaults.
- **Revising discipline policies and procedures:** Students and staff must feel confident that discipline policies are enforced fairly and consistently. This plan includes establishing a written policy governing disciplinary actions, in-school detention, and a guided study area.
- **Revising curriculum:** Many entering freshmen (who are involved in assault incidents in disproportionate numbers) need to learn effective strategies for managing their anger and resolving conflicts in a nonviolent manner. This plan adds a unit on conflict and violence prevention to the ninth-grade social studies curriculum.
- **Mentoring faculty:** Faculty members need to feel confident and supported when they intervene in student disruptions and misbehavior. The goals of this proposal are to encourage teachers to support each other and work together as a team, to provide teachers with information and skills on classroom management, and to prepare teachers to handle conflicts between students if they do occur in classrooms or school hallways.
- **Planning a safety week:** A highlight of the project was to designate one week in which several activities were planned to increase student and staff awareness about school safety and to encourage their participation in violence prevention. Several of the above plans were combined in the activities of School Safety Week. Goals of the week were to promote respect and nonviolence on a schoolwide level and to address some of the problem areas discovered by the project committee as it

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reviewed initial results of the surveys.

Safety Week

School Safety Week took place at Columbia Heights High School April 16–20, 2001. Teachers and other staff members were encouraged to participate in the activities. They were also given information on the problem of school violence and ways to integrate violence prevention ideas into the classroom. To encourage and reward staff and students for their active participation, the project coordinator was able to solicit community and business support for contest awards related to the week's activities, including:

- **Staff incentives:** Anonymous observers noted school staff members who were in the hallways, greeted and thanked them, and entered their names in a drawing to win various prizes, such as gift certificates from restaurants.
- **Alternative to Violence Contest:** Students were invited to answer the question: "What could I do to resolve conflict without resorting to violence?" Students who submitted the three most creative or original entries (submitted in a drop box labeled "Alternatives to Violence") received gift certificates.
- **Insults and Violence Group Project Contest:** Students formed small groups and created posters supporting the themes of School Safety Week. Group projects were judged on their overall message and presentation, and the best three teams received cash prizes.

Activities were focused on five themes, one for each day of the school week. Each day featured a theme, a thought, and an action. See table below.

Widespread Support

Student Safety Week activities received enthusiastic support and participation from students and school staff. Results of an evaluation survey administered to staff and students confirmed that the activities did gain the attention of most of the school community.

Teachers and other staff members said they used the discussion materials in their classroom instruction. They thought the week's activities effectively promoted school safety and said they would like to see it become an annual event.

A majority of students reported that they had noticed and read student posters; attended a class that discussed problems of bullying and threat, along with ways to make school safer; and considered the project to be helpful and a good idea.

The school activities also drew attention from local media. A camera crew and reporter from a local television station visited the high school as part of a report on the growing problem of school violence and positive strategies schools are taking.

The problems of crime and violent behavior will continue to disrupt schools and place added demands on school staffs and police departments. Cooperative community and school efforts can be effective, however. The Columbia Heights Police and Columbia Heights High School teachers have taken a cooperative approach to preventing school violence. This project is an excellent example of what can be accomplished when local police and school officials collaborate in a team effort, with federal assistance and additional resources.

Richard Laurence, Ph.D., is a professor of criminal justice at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota and the author of School Crime and Juvenile Justice *(Oxford University Press, 1998), as well as articles and essays on school crime and school safety. He conducted an evaluation of this project for the funding agency.*

School Safety Week Themes

Day	Theme	Thought for the Day	Action for the Day
Monday	Respect	What words or phrases do I use that are disrespectful?	Go an entire day without using those words.
Tuesday	Empathy	Find a similarity between yourself and someone different from you or your group.	Greet three people you wouldn't usually talk to, outside your group.
Wednesday	Everyday actions	How often do I push, shove, or grab my friends or other students?	Substitute a "high five" for all pushes, shoves, or grabbing.
Thursday	Communicate	Who are the adults at school I feel comfortable talking to and feel could help me?	Listen to someone who doesn't think anyone is listening or cares.
Friday	Responsibility	What can I do to make my school a safer place?	Speak up if you see someone hurting someone else; get them help.

STUDY PROVIDES FIRST DETAILED LOOK AT SCHOOL-RELATED DEATHS

School shootings, suicides, and other violent deaths associated with schools are "rare but complex events," according to a major study published in December in the *Journal of the American Medical Association.* With better understanding of both victims and alleged perpetrators, experts hope to shape future prevention strategies.

School-Associated Violent Deaths in the United States, 1994–1999, is the first systematic investigation of recent school-related deaths. The study was a collaborative effort by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice and the School-Associated Violent Deaths Study Group at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Experts examined 220 events that resulted in 253 violent deaths on or near school campuses between 1994 and 1999. In more than half the cases studied, some type of "potential signal" preceded the event, researchers found. The study also points to a possible link between bullying and aggression, with homicide perpetrators more than twice as likely as homicide victims to have been bullied by peers.

Detailed Information

Researchers interviewed school officials and police sources to obtain information about each event, including details about the victims and the alleged perpetrators. The 253 deaths were a result of homicide, suicide, legal intervention (in which victim was killed by a police officer in the line of duty), or unintentional firearm-related death. Events occurred between July 1, 1994, and June 30, 1999. They took place on a school campus, while the victim was on the way to or from school, or while the victim was attending a school-sponsored event.

Researchers found that most events took place around "transition times" in the school day, such as the start of school, the lunch period, or the end of the day. "Efforts to reduce crowding, increase supervision, and institute plans for handling disputes during these intervals may reduce the likelihood that conflicts will occur," the authors concluded.

Although the rate of single-victim student homicides decreased between 1992 and 1999, rates for students killed in multiple-victim events increased. These events—while rare—included high-profile school shootings such as those in Littleton, Colorado, that have sparked public concern.

The study also underscores what experts have previously pointed out—that violent deaths at school remain rare events. The average annual rate of school-associated violent deaths for students was 0.068 per 100,000 students, authors determined. The study also found demographic trends within school-related deaths: The death rate for male students was more than twice as high as the rate for female students. The rate for non-Hispanic black students was more than three times higher than the rate for non-Hispanic white students. And students in urban school districts experienced a rate of violent death almost twice as high as students in rural areas, according to the study.

Recognizing Threats

The study highlights the importance of investigating threats as an aspect of violence prevention. In more than half the cases, some type of potential signal—a note, threat, journal entry, or other action—had been given prior to the event, researchers found.

In addition, homicide perpetrators were far more likely than homicide victims to have expressed suicidal thoughts, plans, or actual attempts before the event, the study found. Nearly one in five of the deaths investigated for the study involved either homicides followed by suicides or isolated suicides. "It is important that we consider risk factors for suicidal behavior in our efforts to prevent both interpersonal and self-directed school-associated violence," the authors concluded.

In assessing the apparent link between bullying and violence, the authors suggested that bullied youth who act out violently "may represent the 'provocative' or 'aggressive' victims described in recent studies on bullying behavior." These youth represent a particularly high-risk population, the study stressed. As a prevention strategy, the authors stressed the importance of programs designed to help teachers and other school staff members recognize and respond to incidents of bullying between students.

The study appeared in the December 5, 2001, edition of *JAMA.* The full report is available online at jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v286n21/abs/joc11149.html.

RESOURCES HELP GUIDE PLANNING, PROMOTE HEALING

A variety of online resources are available to help schools and communities cope with recent national tragedies. Links to these and other resources are also available on the Web site of the National Resource Center for Safe Schools (www.safetyzone.org).

U.S. Department of Education, Helping Children Understand the Terrorist Attacks
www.ed.gov/inits/september11/

National Association of School Psychologists, Coping with a National Tragedy Page
www.nasponline.org/NEAT/crisis_0911.html

OJJDP, Coping with Tragedy
www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/terrorism.html

National Center for Children Exposed to Violence
www.nccev.org/resources/9-11-01.html

The American School Counselor Association
www.schoolcounselor.org/
Includes fact sheets on these topics:
- Crisis response guide
- Terrorism response: Tips for teachers and parents
- Coping strategies for children and teens
- Student and parent support information

American Psychiatric Association Web page
www.psych.org/public_info/childrentragedy.cfm

National Organization for Victim Assistance Web page
www.try-nova.org/

National Education Association
www.nea.org/01crisis.html
"Helping Families and Children Cope with this National Tragedy" includes separate sections on "Managing Stress Reactions," "Crisis Reaction," "Coping Strategies," and a "Stress Symptom Checklist."

Center for Mental Health Services in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration
www.mentalhealth.org/cmhs/emergencyservices/after.htm
Web page includes "After a Disaster" techniques, including information on "How to Help Children After a Disaster," "After a Disaster: What Teens Can Do," "After a Disaster: A Guide for Parents and Teachers," "Older Adults," "Mental Health Aspects of Terrorism," and "Disaster Counseling." Most articles are also available (from the same site) in Spanish versions.

American Psychological Association
helping.apa.org/therapy/traumaticstress.html
Web site includes a page entitled "How Therapy Helps: Managing Traumatic Stress: Tips for Recovering From Disasters and Other Traumatic Events" that contains information on "What happens to people after a disaster or other traumatic event?", "How do people respond differently over time?", "How should I help myself and my family?", "How do I take care of children's special needs?", "When should I seek professional help?", and "How may I use APA as a resource?"

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
"Facts for Families" series includes downloadable fact sheets on "Helping Children After a Disaster" (www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/disaster.htm), "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)" (www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/ptsd70.htm), "Children and Grief" (www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/grief.htm), "Children and the News" (www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/67.htm), and "How to Talk to Children and Parents After a Disaster" (office.aacap.org/waacap/StaticContent/StaticPages/cp_disas.htm)

UCLA School Mental Health Project has developed a packet on "Responding to a Crisis at a School" (smhp.psych.ucla.edu/crisis.htm) which can be downloaded or ordered from their Center for Mental Health in Schools.

Sesame Street Workshop has developed a Web site on "Tragic Times, Healing Words" (www.sesameworkshop.org/parents/advice/article/0,4125,49560,00.html) with resources on helping children cope with disaster.

National PTA
www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/tragedy/index.asp

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

School-Based Officers Help Prevent Violence

School-based police officers prevent a substantial amount of school violence, enjoy positive relationships with students and educators, and improve the reporting of school crimes that otherwise may go unreported to police, according to the first large-scale survey of school resource officers (SROs). Survey results, released in October, reveal that nearly all school resource officers believe their presence has improved school safety and prevented crime and violence.

The report, released by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), was written by Ken Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services. Findings summarize results of a 61-question survey given to the more than 1,000 resource officers from 47 states who attended a NASRO conference in July.

"This survey validates the proactive role of school resource officers and reinforces that only a very small percentage of school-based officers describe the majority of their work as involving arrests and investigations," said Curt Lavarello, executive director of NASRO. Indeed, 91 percent of officers surveyed reported that at least half their duties consist of preventive tasks, with only 7 percent describing the majority of their work as focused on enforcement and investigations.

As Trump noted in the report, SROs "perform an exceptionally wide range of specific tasks that focus on prevention and, in doing so, break the stereotype of police assigned to schools being strictly as a reactive measure."

Among the highlights of the survey findings:

- 99 percent of SROs believe that their program has improved school safety and prevented crime and violence
- 84 percent of SROs believe that crimes on school campuses are generally underreported to police
- 91 percent of school officers believe that an unarmed officer puts students at a greater risk of harm or injury than if an officer carries a firearm
- 97 percent of officers surveyed carry a firearm on campus

To download a copy of *The 2001 NASRO School Resource Officer Survey*, go to www.nasro.org.

SRO Fact Sheet Available

The National Resource Center for Safe Schools has published a fact sheet outlining the role that school resource officers (SROs) can play in making schools safer.

School-Based Policing and SROs defines a school resource officer as a sworn law enforcement officer of local jurisdiction, assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations. SROs perform a number of duties, including responding to crime, developing crime prevention efforts for students, and training students in conflict resolution skills.

The fact sheet, published in fall 2000, also explains how SRO positions are funded, along with how officers are selected and supervised. Author David J. Kamleiter, a school resource officer in Scottsdale, Arizona, notes that communities use a variety of models for school-based policing. He concludes, "Regardless of style of uniform, type of supervision, and formal relationship between the school and law enforcement agency, the success of an SRO program depends on dedicated efforts of officers, law enforcement supervisors, and school officials working together to make schools safer."

The fact sheet, eighth in a series, can be downloaded from the NRCSS Web site: www.safetyzone.org/publications/fact8_article1.html.

Crime at School Continues To Decline

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As the rate of crime at the nation's schools continues to decline, students seem to feel more secure at school now than just a few years ago, according to the latest in a series of reports tracking school safety indicators.

Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2001, was released in October by the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

The report shows that crime at school has decreased since 1992. Between 1992 and 1999, violent victimization rates at schools declined from 48 crimes per 1,000 students ages 12–18 to 33 crimes per 1,000 students.

The report supports previous findings that school remains one of the safest places for young people. In 1999, students were more than twice as likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school as at school.

The statistics show that students seem to feel more secure at school now than in previous years. The percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported avoiding one or more places at school for their own safety decreased from 9 percent in 1995 to 5 percent in 1999.

The report is the fourth in a series of annual reports on school crime and safety. Copies can be ordered from the Bureau of Justice Statistic Clearinghouse (1-800-732-3277), or downloaded at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/scs01.htm.

CALENDAR

January 24–26

Eighth Joint National Conference on Alternatives to Expulsion, Suspension, and Dropping Out of School, Kissimmee, Florida. Conference will share insights on the causes and problems related to school expulsions, suspensions, and dropouts, and examine ways to deal with students who are considered delinquent, violent, or dangerous. Contact: Registrar, Safe Schools Coalition, Inc. Phone: 1-800-537-4903. E-mail: ssc@tampabay.rr.com. Web: www.ed.mtu.edu/safe/alternatives_to_expulsion_8.htm

February 4–6

National Network for Youth—Symposium 2002 Partners in Vision, Partners in Action, Washington, D.C. Symposium 2002 explores the youth work field's most promising new developments in practice and policy. The conference program is designed to benefit and recognize the diversity of all those who work with youth. Symposium 2002 will offer more than 70 sessions featuring keynotes, workshops, networking opportunities, special events, and an exhibitor showcase. Contact: Donna Christian-Bruce. Phone: (202) 783-7949 ext. 3105. E-mail: DBruce@NN4Youth.org

February 26–March 1

National Association of School Psychologists 34th Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois. The conference—Overcoming Barriers, Increasing Access, Serving All Children—will offer more than 600 workshops, presentations, sessions, and events. Phone: (301) 657-0270. E-mail: convention@naspweb.org. Web: www.nasponline.org

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